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C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 000501

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W, INR/AA
STATE PASS NSC FOR BOBBY PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: MILITANT CAMPS CONTROLLED BY DISTANT
POWER-BROKERS

REF: A. LAGOS 434
[1](#)B. ABUJA 1951

1: (C) Summary: The President of the oil services company Nestoil, Ernest Azudialu, told PolOffs November 17 that governors of the Niger Delta States know the leaders of the militant camps personally and seek to eliminate the violence in their states by co-opting these leaders. When cooptation failed in Rivers State, Governor Rotimi Amaechi (PDP) initiated military confrontation. Azudialu claimed that the militant leaders whose names are widely known are not the people who really control the militants, but rather are themselves controlled by distant patrons. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Ernest Azudialu, President of oil services company Nestoil, told PolOffs on November 17 that the governors of the states plagued by widespread violence know exactly which power-brokers actually control the militants and seek to eliminate the violence by co-opting them. This is easiest in Delta and Bayelsa, where one camp, that of Tom Polo, is much stronger than the others and so able to exert its will over them when expedient, according to Azudialu. The governors of Delta and Bayelsa states can maintain a semblance of peace by making payments to the leaders of the powerful camps. Furthermore, even when independent criminals engage in violence, the major militants can exert their influence, Azudialu claims. As an example, Azudialu reported that when kidnappings of Nestoil workers occur in Delta or Bayelsa state, it takes only one call to get them released within 24 hours. (Note: this report would appear to corroborate what PolOffs were told regarding the release of one trawler crew in Bayelsa state, per ref tel a. End Note.)

[1](#)3. (C) This situation in Delta and Bayelsa contrasts with that in Rivers State, where there are rival camps fighting for control, Azudialu said. According to Azudialu, Governor Amaechi had tried to co-opt key camp leaders in Rivers State but discovered that there were many criminal camps operating and none was willing to subordinate itself to another. In consequence, there was no one person with whom to negotiate or to make payments. The resulting military campaign, Azudialu said, is successful, and if it continues for another six months will eliminate violent crime in Rivers State.

[1](#)4. (C) Azudialu claimed people who live far from the violence and the misery of the Niger Delta control the camps, not the militant leaders whose names are widely known. These distant power-brokers profit from the current situation, and

government officials buy peace by negotiating with them for cease-fires, hostage releases etc. Azudialu suggested that the close ties between these leaders and government explained why no major militant commander had been captured or killed, citing a case where the military Joint Task Force (JTF) was called off as soon as it got too close to killing or capturing a militant leader.

15. (C) Comment: We have known for sometime that there are power-brokers that control the oil bunkering in the Niger Delta so comments by Azudialu are nothing new. We have heard that many of these brokers live outside Nigeria. It is common knowledge also that military and government leaders are also complicit in oil theft. These issues are the main reasons why very little has been done to address oil bunkering and its attendant consequences for Niger Delta development. End Comment.

16. (U) This cable has been cleared by Embassy Abuja.

BLAIR